

August 13, 2013

Hon. Edmund G. Brown, Jr.  
Governor  
State Capitol Building  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: PRIORITY ACTIONS TO ACHIEVE A DELTA SOLUTION**

Governor Brown,

We are writing to thank you for meeting with us last week to discuss the necessary elements of a comprehensive solution to the ecosystem restoration and water supply reliability problems of the Bay-Delta. As you know, we have been working with your Administration from the beginning to craft such a solution through the Bay-Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP), the State Water Resources Control Board's (SWRCB) update of Bay-Delta water quality standards, and related processes. We appreciate the opportunity to meet with you and hope that we now share a mutual goal of incorporating necessary elements into these processes.

In our dialogue with you, we asked for your help in accomplishing three extremely important actions:

**Securing a major increase in ecologically vital freshwater flows into, through and from the Delta to San Francisco Bay.** We must move the needle significantly away from the current situation where we divert half of the flows in the Bay-Delta watershed – which has produced the unacceptable status quo – and move closer to the flow target of 75% of runoff that the SWRCB said in 2010 is needed to fully protect the public trust values of the Delta. Making this change will require a strong and timely set of decisions by the SWRCB to set new flow standards and allocate responsibility for meeting them among all major water users; pursuing additional mechanisms for acquiring water and water rights for the environment; and ensuring that the final BDCP project contributes its full share of providing more flow, not less, for the vulnerable Bay-Delta estuary.

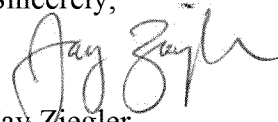
**Developing local and regional water supplies that reduce reliance on the Delta** Moving water users off the Delta as a water supply source will require a comprehensive approach developed on the same timetable as BDCP and other processes. This will require combining executive actions including targets for reducing reliance on the Delta, with economic incentives to spur large-scale investment in local self-reliance and other measures.


Water conservation, recycling, stormwater recapture, groundwater clean-up and banking efforts, facilitation and accountability in water transfers that are beneficial for the environment and in meeting water supply needs, and other measures are all tools to create more reliable water supplies. Together these tools can be implemented as the basis of a strategy to reduce the vulnerability of areas currently dependent on Delta water supplies to climate change related disruptions, environmental degradation, and competition with other water users. Increasing local efficiency goes hand in hand with increasing the value and yield of agricultural and industrial production.

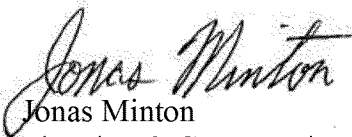
**Making absolutely clear what the BDCP is intended to achieve, who is responsible for achieving the plan's targets, and who decides whether those obligations are met.** BDCP is intended to be an ambitious, 50-year project to recover endangered species and restore their habitats under state and federal law. If implemented in combination with improved flows and local water supplies, BDCP could also help to achieve the state's co-equal goals and related multiple objectives in the Delta by such actions as restoring floodplain and wetland habitats, which provide benefits for fish and wildlife and can also better absorb highwater flood flows during flood events. Successfully permitting and implementing BDCP will require setting clear, enforceable targets for species recovery and habitat restoration that the plan must achieve; defining actions that will be taken if targets aren't achieved and the conditions for adaptively managing the plan's implementation (including changes to the default setting for water project operations, which must provide more flows than today, at critical periods when they are needed to protect threatened fisheries across the Delta); and ensuring that the permitting agencies make the final decisions about whether the plan's objectives are being met and what adaptive management actions must be taken to meet those objectives.


We urge you to take the necessary steps to achieve these three actions so vital to crafting and implementing a Delta solution that truly accomplishes the co-equal goals of restoring the Delta ecosystem and providing reliable water supplies. We look forward to continuing to work with you and your administration to achieve a large-scale increase in flows and habitat restoration for the Delta's endangered species and habitats, implement a comprehensive approach to improving local and regional water supplies, and make the changes necessary to gain a permissible and effective BDCP.

Sincerely,

  
Jay Ziegler  
The Nature Conservancy

  
Kate Poole  
Natural Resources Defense Council

  
Jonas Minton  
Planning & Conservation League

  
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